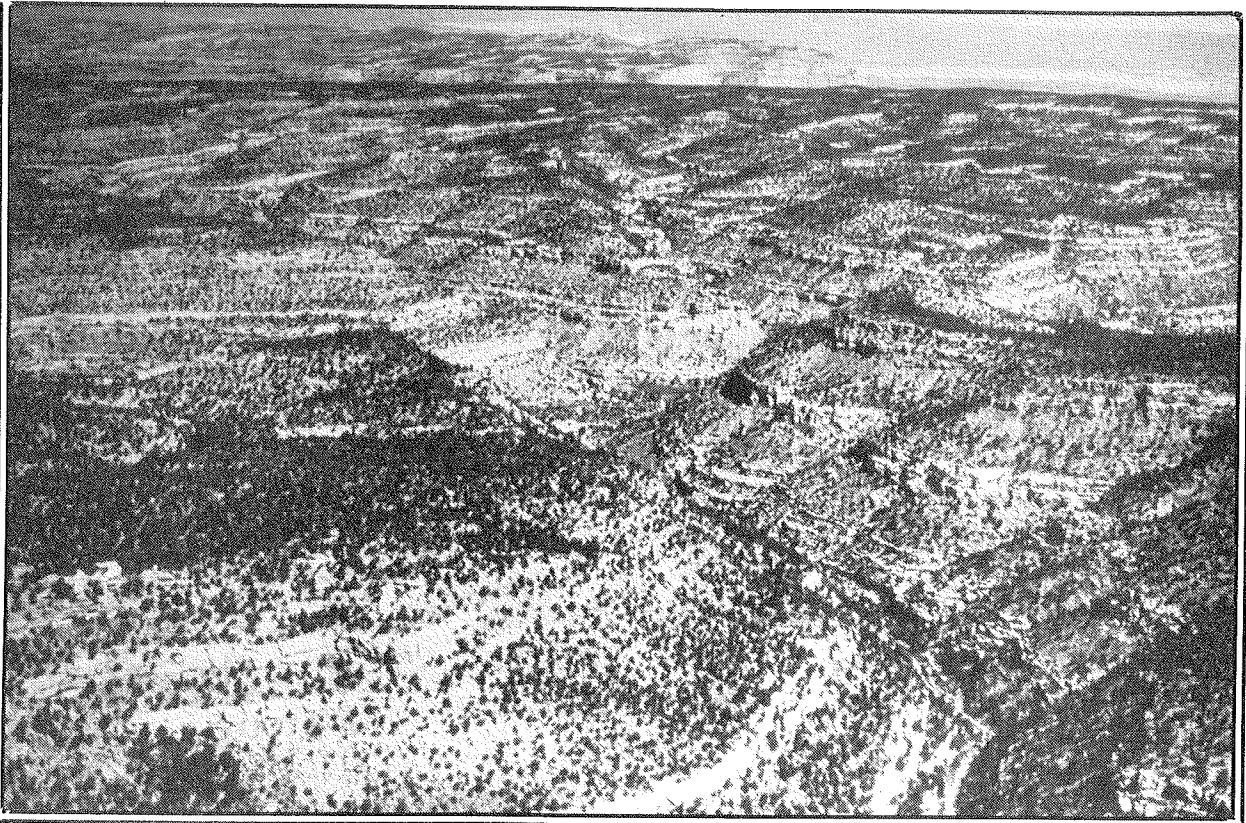


Carcass Canyon WSA



CARCASS CANYON WSA

T. 36 S.

T. 37 S.

T. 38 S.

R. 3 E.

R. 4 E.

Carcass Canyon WSA Proposal UT-040-076



RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS



RECOMMENDED FOR
NON-WILDERNESS



LAND OUTSIDE WSA
RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE LAND
WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY



STATE LAND WITHIN
WSA BOUNDARY



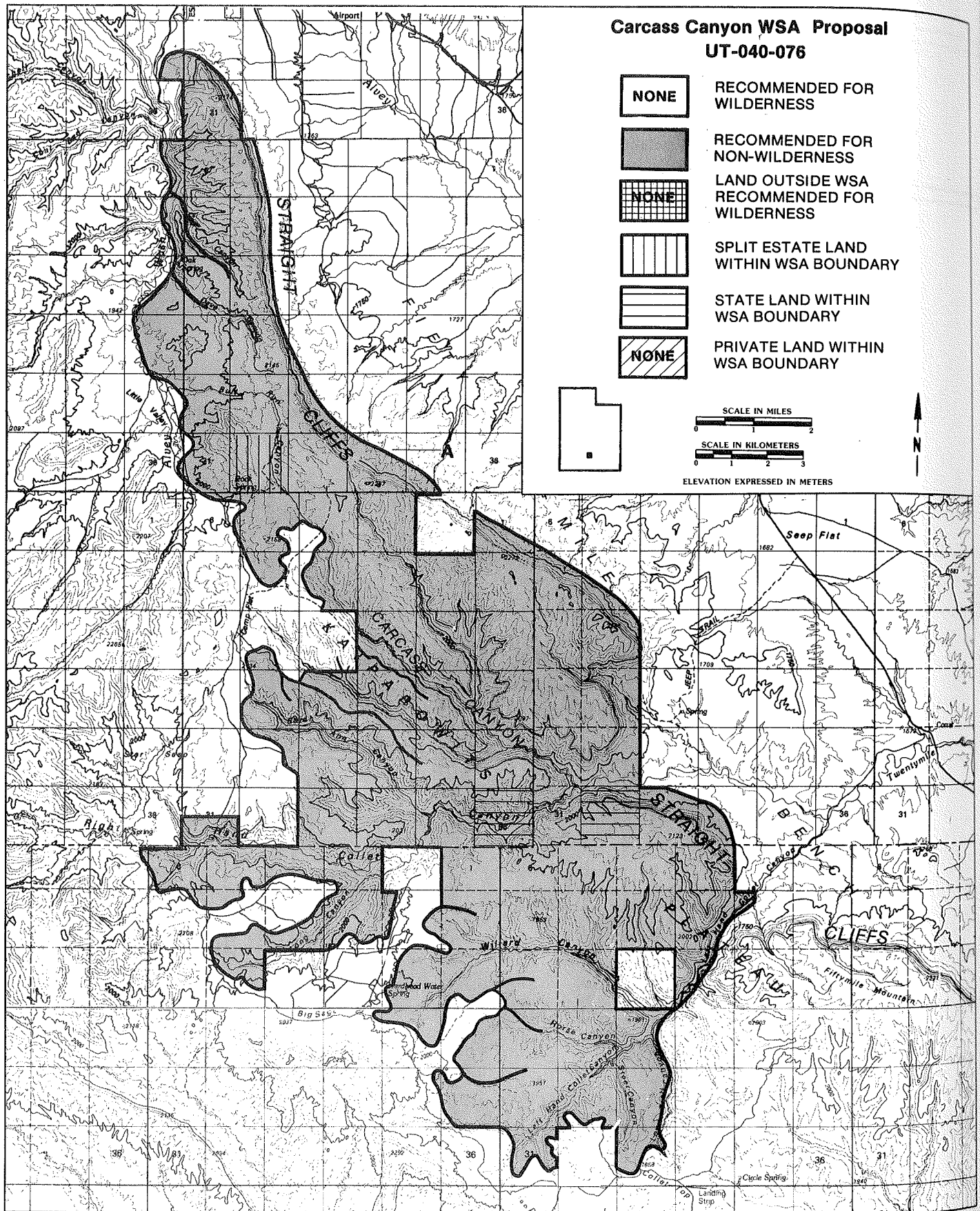
PRIVATE LAND WITHIN
WSA BOUNDARY



SCALE IN MILES
0 1 2

SCALE IN KILOMETERS
0 1 2 3

ELEVATION EXPRESSED IN METERS



October 1991

CARCASS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 46,711 acres

The Carcass Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-040-076) is in eastern Garfield and Kane Counties, about 2 miles south of Escalante, Utah (population 652). The WSA is irregularly shaped, narrower in the north than in the south, about 20 miles from north to south and 11 miles wide, from east to west. Roads separate the WSA from the Death Ridge WSA (UT-040-078) to the west and south and the Fiftymile Mountain WSA (UT-040-080) to the southeast (see Map). The WSA contains 46,711 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Two State sections (1,280 acres) and 640 acres of split-estate land with Federal surface and State minerals are inheld in the WSA (see Table 1).

The Straight Cliffs, a distinctive easterly-facing escarpment, forms the eastern edge of the WSA except for 3 miles along section lines. The study area consists of several canyons that cut into the Kaiparowits Plateau. Elevations vary from less than 5,400 feet in the southeast corner of the WSA to more than 7,500 feet atop the Straight Cliffs. Pinyon-juniper dominates, but sagebrush, grasses, and scattered Douglas fir and ponderosa pine are also found.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in November 1990.

TABLE 1
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	46,711
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)*	640
In-holdings (State, Private)	1,280
Total	48,631
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	0
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	0
In-holdings (State, private)	0
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	46,711
Split-Estate	640
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	47,351
In-holdings (State, Private)	1,280

Source: BLM File Data

* In this report, split-estate lands are defined as only those lands with Federal surface and non-Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non-Federal surface are classified according to the owner of the surface.

CARCASS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness (no action) alternative, which is the recommendation in this report, and an all wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

0 acres
recommended for wilderness)
46,711 acres
(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to release the entire area for uses other than wilderness. Designation of the entire area as wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The alternative selected, however would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

Although all of the WSA exhibits the characteristic of naturalness, 57 percent of the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude and only 25 percent has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation. A large portion (92 percent) of the WSA is within the Kaiparowits Known Recoverable Coal Resource Area. The potential for discovery of uranium is high. Extraction of coal and uranium are not expected in the short term, but the long-term mineral potential is considered to outweigh wilderness values in the WSA.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. The naturalness attributes are of high quality in the canyon systems of the WSA. Important canyons include the Right Hand Collet Canyon, Sarah Ann Canyon, and the Carcass Canyon system. Imprints in the WSA include 2.5 miles of fence, two spring developments, one corral, and 5 miles of

way. Overall, the WSA appears natural, with the imprint of man substantially unnoticeable. The high quality of naturalness in the canyons has not changed since the BLM Intensive Wilderness Inventory decision. No surface-disturbing activities have occurred since the inventory.

B. Solitude

Opportunities for solitude meet the criterion for outstanding on approximately 26,500 acres (57 percent) of the WSA. Outstanding solitude exists where combinations of terrain and vegetation provide a sense of isolation by screening visitors from each other. The size and configuration of the WSA neither enhances nor detracts from the opportunities for solitude.

Outstanding opportunities for solitude are in the Right Hand and Left Hand Collet drainage where canyons and intervening rimrock ridges provide screening. Terrain enhances screening by pinyon-juniper, Douglas fir, and Ponderosa pine forest. Most canyons in the WSA have outstanding opportunities for solitude.

In much of the remainder of the WSA, the benches and ridges between canyons are flat with a pinyon-juniper forest cover of moderate density. In the Calf Canyon-Alvey Wash area, the Carcass Canyon drainage, and the area north of Willard Canyon, the intervening ridges have ledges and a denser forest cover. Visitors can find seclusion in the Carcass Canyon system of canyons.

The sights and sounds of human activities are not apparent from most places within the WSA. From the top of the Straight Cliffs, vehicular activity on the Hole-in-the-Rock Road can be observed, but this is a minor distraction.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Overall, outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation are found on 11,800 acres (25 percent) of the WSA. Approximately 10,500 of these acres also have outstanding opportunities for solitude.

The opportunity to explore is outstanding in the Carcass Canyon WSA. No other outstanding individual activity was

CARCASS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

identified, nor has a diversity of primitive activities been identified.

The opportunity for exploration is outstanding in complex canyon systems, along the top of the Straight Cliffs, and on the narrow ridges in the WSA. The Carcass Canyon drainage is an area of 15 square miles with three major forks which comprise 16 miles of canyon bottom. Numerous lateral canyons join the main branches, and the drainage system totals 43 miles of canyons. Because of the density of canyons, approximately 3 miles of canyon bottom per square mile, the intervening ridges between canyons in the Carcass Canyon drainage are extremely narrow and precipitous and represent the best opportunity for hiking and exploration. The rim of the Straight Cliffs also exhibits this opportunity, with 1,700 acres north and south of the Carcass Canyon area.

D. Special Features

The paleontological values contained within the WSA are of scientific value. Invertebrate and vertebrate specimens are found in the Straight Cliffs, Tropic Shale, and Dakota Formations. These scientific values occur along the entire length of the Straight Cliffs.

The naturally occurring coal fires of Right Hand Collet Canyon left clinkers and deep red ash on the ground surface, which dominate the visual character in portions of the drainage.

The Straight Cliffs, rising 2,000 feet above the Escalante Valley floor, are a scenic landmark in southern Utah. The cliffs are the dominant topographic feature between the Town of Escalante and Lake Powell, and provide spectacular scenic views of the Escalante River drainage, the Waterpocket Fold, Boulder Mountain, and the Henry Mountains. One arch with a span of 40 feet, in Calf Canyon, is visible from the Alvey Wash road.

Several archaeological sites have been recorded in this WSA. The sites consist of open campsites, lithic scatters, petroglyphs, and cave habitation sites.

The WSA has a small population of cougar, which is a wildlife species common-

ly associated with wilderness. Peregrine falcons and bald eagles, which are listed as endangered species, may occasionally use the WSA. Nine other animal species and seven plant species, which are considered to be sensitive species, may occur in the WSA. Refer to Appendix 4 and the Affected Environment, Wildlife Including Special Status Species section of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Final EIS for additional information.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystem not presently represented in Utah or in the NWPS.

PNV is the vegetative type that would eventually become climax vegetation if not altered by human interference, and is not necessarily the vegetation that is currently present in an area.

The WSA is in the Colorado Plateau Province/Ecoregion. The PNV in the WSA is entirely juniper-pinyon woodland (46,711 acres). The PNV in the WSA is represented in the NWPS nationally and in Utah and in other BLM study areas both in and outside of Utah. This information is summarized in Table 2 from data compiled in December 1989.

B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is not within a 5-hour drive of any major population centers.

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Carcass Canyon WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas within the NWPS.

As of January, 1987, the NWPS included 64 areas comprising 2,834,115 acres in Utah and Arizona.

CARCASS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	11	1,401,745	84	2,209,294
UTAH (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	26,000	53	1,659,487

Source: BLM File Data.

There are seven designated wilderness areas within 100 miles of the WSA. In a clockwise direction beginning to the north are the 26,000-acre Box-Death Hollow Wilderness (Forest Service [FS]), the 45,00-acre Dark Canyon Wilderness (FS), the 112,000-acre Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness (BLM), the 6860-acre Cottonwood Point Wilderness (BLM), the 70,500-acre Kanab Creek Wilderness (FS and BLM units), the 40,600-acre Saddle Mountain Wilderness (FS), and the 7,000-acre Ashdown Gorge Wilderness (FS).

Manageability (The area must be capable of being managed effectively to preserve its wilderness character.)

The Carcass Canyon WSA could be effectively managed as wilderness in the foreseeable future. Even though there are 18,494 acres of coal lease, 1,071 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas lease in the WSA, it is expected that these leases would expire and would not be renewed if the area is designated as wilderness. There are 1,780 acres of mining claims in the WSA. Because of moderate to high uranium potential it is expected that part of the existing and future mining claims located as of the date of designation will be at least explored, resulting in about 7 acres of surface disturbance in the foreseeable future.

The presence of three in-held sections of State land in the WSA, including split-estate, could complicate wilderness management in the long-term future.

Of the 1,920 acres of in-held State land, the 640 acres of split-estate are leased for coal. Because of the known coal resources in the WSA, and some potential for oil and gas, it is projected that new access roads to the State land would be required through the area following wilderness designation. Additionally, any coal mining operations on the State lands and cherrystems would reduce wilderness values on the adjacent wilderness lands.

Livestock grazing and maintenance of existing facilities including nine spring developments, 2.5 miles of fence, two reservoirs, and one corral would continue, but would not significantly affect the wilderness values of the WSA.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Because the WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) did not prepare a mineral assessment report for the area. The USGS and USBM mineral summary for this WSA, however, states that the entire study area has a high mineral potential for coal and a moderate resource potential for oil and gas, carbon dioxide, and geothermal sources in the subsurface and for uranium and thin beds of gypsum in the surface and subsurface. The study area also has a low mineral resource potential for all metals other than uranium.

According to BLM geologists, the potential for oil and gas resources is low.

CARCASS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The WSA is within the Kaiparowits coal field. Minable coal-bearing strata underlie all of the WSA except for about 4,000 acres along the eastern boundary. An estimated 550 million tons of relatively high quality coal are in the WSA.

The potential for geothermal energy is low. No hot springs are known in the vicinity of the WSA and the geologic conditions are not favorable for geothermal resources. The central portion of the WSA is considered to have a high potential for undiscovered deposits of uranium, and the remainder of the WSA has moderate potential. The depth of the formations that may contain uranium deposits is about 700 feet, however, indicating that recovery of uranium may not be undertaken in the short-term future.

Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 3) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the area as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

With BLM's recommendation the WSA would not be designated as wilderness but would be released for other uses. The recommended action would not result in a loss of local employment or income. Federal and State revenues would not be reduced. Economic opportunities could be realized through mineral and energy resource exploration and eventual development in the long term.

The study area would be open to coal leasing. Coal mining is not anticipated in the short term, but exploration and mining could occur within the next 30 years. With coal development there would be major beneficial and adverse effects in Garfield and Kane Counties.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 54 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 324 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statement by the same commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs.

In general, 45 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 274 commenters were opposed. Five commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the special features in the WSA. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were almost equally from rural and urban Utah and from outside the State. Of particular concern was the need to protect other resource values.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would conflict with or preclude mineral exploration and development, livestock operations, flood control and water rights, public access, or other uses; is not compatible with multiple use; would harm State and local economies; and that designation is not necessary to protect the WSA. The great majority of those opposed were from rural Utah.

Two Federal agencies, the FS and USBM commented on the Draft EIS. The FS stated that the Dixie National Forest concurs with the recommendation to not propose wilderness in the WSA. The USBM did not take a position regarding designation or nondesignation but commented that BLM had understated the petroleum potential of the WSA.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are two sections (1,280 acres) of State land and one section (640 acres) of split-estate land with State minerals in the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the State of Utah expressed general

CARCASS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

opposition to wilderness designation but did not take a definite position regarding wilderness designation of the WSA. The State ranks the WSA as low in wilderness quality and high for coal conflict. The State noted that the cultural resources on the Escalante Rim and south of Right Hand Collet Canyon may need to be recognized.

The Garfield and Kane County Commissions are opposed to wilderness designation of the Carcass Canyon WSA and have endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation of BLM lands in Utah. In commenting on the Draft EIS the Counties supported BLM's no action/no wilderness proposed action.

The Kane County Master Plan rejects wilderness as an exclusionary form of recreation that cannot be used by the average visitor. Garfield County previously proposed to the Utah Congressional Delegation that 111,053 acres of BLM lands in three WSAs and 31,600 acres in one FS unit in the County be recommended as wilderness. The Garfield County Master Plan recommends that the remaining lands in the county, including the Carcass Canyon WSA, be retained for multiple uses.

CARCASS CANYON WSA

Table 3
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topic	Alternatives	
	Recommendation No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (61,550 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation, and loss would occur as intrusions increase. In the short-term future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 628 acres of the WSA because of development of rangeland projects, vegetation treatments, and access to State in-held lands for mineral exploration and indirectly reduced in quality on up to 7,007 acres. Special features would not be significantly affected. Vehicular use of 5 miles of ways as well as washes and exploration roads would occasionally detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Coal development over the long term would result in direct loss of wilderness values on 40 acres and an indirect reduction in the quality of wilderness values on up to an additional 4,670 acres. Special features would not be significantly affected.	Wilderness designation would preserve overall the wilderness values in the WSA. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 9 acres because of uranium exploration and development of access roads to State in-holdings for mineral exploration. The quality of wilderness values would be indirectly reduced on up to 1,400 acres of the WSA. Special features would be preserved.
Impacts on Vegetation	Special status plant species would not be significantly affected. Only about 1.4 percent (668 acres) of the pinyon-juniper woodland in the WSA would be altered as a result of rangeland projects and long term coal development. Therefore, there would not be significant changes in the vegetation types in the WSA.	Implementation of the All Wilderness Alternative would not significantly affect the vegetation resource in the WSA. Vegetation types and special status plant species would be protected because potential disturbance would be reduced to 9 acres.

CARCASS CANYON WSA

Table 3 (Continued)
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topic	Alternatives	
	Recommendation No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (61,550 Acres)
Impacts on Mineral and Energy Exploration and Development	Implementation of the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative would not adversely affect mineral exploration or production because minerals could be leased, claimed, and developed as at present.	Wilderness designation would preclude or severely constrain potential development of about 280 million tons of recoverable coal. Loss of exploration and development opportunities for other mineral and energy resources would not be significant because the probability of development is low even if the area is not designated as wilderness.
Impacts on Wildlife Habitat and Populations	Wildlife habitat and populations including special status animal species would not be significantly affected. Implementation of the projected water and vegetation treatment projects would benefit wildlife by providing additional water, forage, and ecotones. Less than 1.4 percent (668 acres) of the wildlife habitat in the WSA would be affected.	Wilderness designation would preclude 600 acres of vegetation treatments designed to improve wildlife habitat and livestock forage, but would provide all species with additional opportunities for solitude. Only 9 acres of wildlife habitat would be disturbed in the WSA.
Impacts on Livestock Management	Livestock management and grazing lands would not be adversely affected because access and management practices would continue as at present. Approximately 600 acres of seeding that would produce 95 AUMs of forage could be done.	Wilderness designation would not significantly affect current livestock management practices. Restricting motorized use of the 5 miles of ways could slightly increase management costs and inconvenience the 7 permittees. The opportunity for an increase of 95 AUMs through vegetation treatments would be foregone.

CARCASS CANYON WSA

Table 3 (Continued)
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topic	Alternatives	
	Recommendation No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (61,550 Acres)
Impacts on Cultural Resources	Cultural resources would continue to be protected by existing laws. Unintentional damages to sites may occur as a result of vegetation treatments and some vandalism may occur due to continued vehicular access. Cultural resource management would continue without regard to preservation of other wilderness values.	Prohibiting most surface disturbance and vehicular access would provide additional protection for cultural resources including 105 known sites. Management of cultural resources may be restricted in scope and execution in order to protect other wilderness values.
Impacts on Economic Conditions	No loss of local employment or income would occur. Federal and State revenues would not be reduced. Economic opportunities could be realized through mineral and energy resource exploration and eventual development in the long term. There would be major beneficial and adverse effects in Garfield and Kane Counties.	Wilderness designation would not significantly affect present local or regional economic conditions. However, new leasing in the WSA would not be allowed; therefore, potential sales and revenues from the coal would be foregone. Over the long term, coal development and associated beneficial and adverse economic impacts would not occur. This would significantly change future economic conditions in Garfield and Kane Counties from what they would be without wilderness designation.